

UNTOLD

STORY LEADS FROM MONTANA



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This Ain't No Rodeo

Cowboys and downhill skiers don't generally hang out in the same crowd, but when it comes to ski joring there's no better combination.

Ski joring? Yes, ski joring; it's a sport where a horse and rider pull a skier through an obstacle course. And some of the finest ski jorers in the country will gather in Red Lodge, Montana, March 9-10, for the National Ski Joring Finals.

"This is a real team sport," says Tami Stevens with the Red Lodge Ski Joring Association. "Generally the person who does this is more of a risk taker. Downhill skiers are usually better than Nordic skiers, and most of the cowboys and cowgirls have some roping background."

Ski joring didn't start out as a sport, but as a mode of transportation for

"...the person who does this is more of a risk taker."



National Finals Ski-Joring races in Red Lodge.

Scandinavians. However, instead of trailing behind a horse skiers were pulled by reindeer. Stevens says Red Lodge has a long tradition of ski joring. She has seen photos of an area rancher joring in the 1940s to feed his cows, and this southern Montana mountain community has hosted ski joring events for over 20 years.

Competitors at this year's event will negotiate a 250-yard horseshoe-shaped course that has a minimum of 12 gates and 3 jumps. According to Stevens, a competi-

tive time is around 15 seconds. "You run like a bat out of hell to be in the money." This year's purse is worth \$25,000.

The Red Lodge Finals is the culmination of eight competitions in the North American Ski Joring Association Circuit. One hundred plus teams composed of men, women and juniors from across the country will be on hand.

For more information on the Red Lodge event call (406) 446-3232 or www.redlodge.com/ski-joring.

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Easy Rider

It's not unusual to see lycra-clad bikers pedaling their way up Montana's mountain trails in the summer months. But if you happen to visit the Showdown Ski Area in the winter, you'll spot another type of biker on the hill, a snowbiker.

Simply described, the snowbike resembles a squatty version of the old stingray bicycle. However, short skis replace the tires. The handlebars control the front ski, while the back ski remains stationary. The key to maneuvering one of these contraptions is to shift your weight and let the "tires" or skis carve your turns in the direction you want to go.

At Showdown, located 65 miles southeast of Great Falls, bikers are required to take a two-hour lesson before hitting the slopes on their own. "Anybody can do this because it's easy to pick it up and they are not as threat-

ening as skis," says George Willett, owner of Showdown. But since weight is essential in negotiating the turns, a rider must weigh at least 125 pounds to experience this thrill. 2002 will be the fifth season for the bikes at Showdown. It is currently the only ski hill in Montana that rents them out.

So how are skiers reacting to the bikes? "They say, boy that looks fun. I think they're infectious," explains George. He also adds that they are catching on with ex-skiers who have knee problems, because the bike takes the pressure off the knees.

Professional riders can reach speeds of up to 100 miles per hour, but George generally travels about 25-30 miles per hour. "It seems like you're going a lot faster than you



Snowbikers at Showdown.

are because you are closer to the ground. But if you go with the flow of the ski traffic you'll fit right in."

Ready to trade in your tires for some skis? Log onto www.showdownmontana.com or call 800-433-0022.

Nothing is Going to Stop Us Now

It was the summer of 2000 and the Grasser family, who owns the Lost Trail Powder Mountain ski area in southwest Montana, were in the middle of constructing a new chairlift. The Saddle Mountain Chair would offer their skiers an additional 1,000 acres of terrain. "Oh, the expansion was a dream come true for my dad," says Julie Grasser. Julie's family has owned the ski area for over 30 years. But suddenly, construction came to a screeching halt. Fire struck. Lost Trail, located on the Montana-Idaho border in the stunning Bitterroot Mountain Range, was in the center of the most dramatic fire activity Montana has ever experienced.

Now, one year later, the Grasser family's dream will become reality. The Saddle Mountain lift is ready to whisk skiers to the top of the mountain to runs that drop 1,800



vertical feet. The chair will be one of the longest double lifts in the country. Lost Trail will now have 4 chairlifts and 33 runs. The majority of the terrain is intermediate.

"Lost Trail has no intention of competing with the big ski resorts in Montana," explains Julie. "We just want to continue to focus on bringing in area families and try

our best to keep prices affordable so they will come back and not make it a one-time vacation." However, she admits that skiing is an expensive sport and it is expensive to make changes and still keep it affordable and offer your visitors the services they want. But even

with that said, Lost Trail still has some of the lowest lift tickets in the state. A full-day adult pass costs \$20 and kids ski for \$10. "These prices are pretty unheard of these days," adds Julie.

For more information on Lost Trail Powder Mountain or any of Montana's other 15 ski areas log onto www.wintermt.com.

A Fight for Freedom

August 2002 marks the 125th commemoration of the Battle of the Big Hole, one of the most consequential battles of the Indian Wars. To commemorate this event, organizers are staging activities that will both honor those killed in the fight and teach those visiting the site about the history and impact of the war.



Big Hole Battlefield.

In the summer of 1877 five bands of Nez Perce Indians began a 1,300-mile journey through the Montana Territory. They were fleeing for their freedom. U.S. Army troops had orders to place the Nez Perce on a reservation.

Along the trek, which would end with Chief Joseph's famous surrender near the Montana/Canada border, the U.S. troops and Nez Perce people engaged in several skirmishes.

The most devastating was the Battle of the Big Hole. The fighting began before dawn on August 8, 1877, when troops from the 7th U.S. Infantry attacked the Indian camp. The mêlée raged for two days before the Nez Perce escaped. Sixty to 90 Nez Perce lay dead. The U.S. Army lost 29 men with another 40 wounded.

The Battle of the Big Hole is a significant event in U.S. history and event coordinators want to teach visitors this history. "I want (visitors) to remember three things when they leave these sites," says Jon G. James, superintendent of the Big Hole National Battlefield. "First, that this was one of the most devastating Indian battles in history. Second, this is one of the best documented Indian battles. Third, this battle and war in total really impacts the Nez Perce people today." The 125th commemoration will feature descendants of those who fought on both sides of the battle, special guest lecturers, history tours, and Nez Perce empty saddle ceremonies and pipe ceremonies.

To find out more about this event call the Big Hole National Battlefield at (406) 689-3155 or www.nps.gov/biho/

Montana's First Tourism Bureau



The Crow Fair Powwow and Rodeo, the Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument, the National Bison Range and the Museum of the Plains Indian are just a few of the fascinating events, historical sites and cultural museums a visitor may discover on one of Montana's seven Indian reservations. While Montana's Indians have worked to adapt to the changing world around them, they have kept the rich culture and traditions of their past. This heritage contributes immeasurably to Montana.

According to Dr. Henri Mann, endowed chair with the Native American Studies program at Montana State University, "As the

first Americans, we (Indian People) created the first tourism bureaus. We love this beautiful earth, in all its mystique and we are honored to share it with others. We have been playing good hosts for the past 500 years, a way of life grounded in the generosity of the Indian spirit. A spirit that can still be experienced when you visit our homelands."

In the spirit of cooperation, Travel Montana and the Montana Tribal Tourism Alliance created the Montana Indian Nations website <http://indiannations.visitmt.com> to provide insight into Montana's 11 tribes. This unique site links visitors to Montana's Blackfeet, Crow, Flathead, Fort Belknap, Fort Peck, Northern Cheyenne and Rocky Boy reservations. Information on lodging, guided recreational services, educational opportunities and other cultural programs or points of interest can all be accessed. A complementary Montana Indian Country brochure is available through Travel Montana by calling 800-548-3390.

Redefining Billings

If you would have asked a Montanan a decade ago to describe Billings, Montana's largest city of 100,000, they might have said sugar beets, oil refineries and stockyards. But today the words that come to mind are latte, museums, cafes and tree-lined streets. You could say that the Magic City has been magically revitalized.

"The wonderful thing about downtown Billings is that the area encompasses a lot of historic districts," says Kurt Kruger, director of the Downtown Billings Association. "There is a great mix of young and old people experiencing what the downtown area has to offer."

Like many medium-sized towns across the country, downtown Billings began to stagnate when the malls and suburban business districts sprung up.

One area that became particularly seedy was the historic railroad-train depot district that stretches along Montana Avenue from 21st to 30th Streets. This once bustling business strip was deserted. But in the past few years, a diverse mix of business folks have worked together to breathe life into the old hotels and restaurants that once thrived here. Various restaurants, antique shops, art galleries, a yoga center and martini bar now line the street.

Another facet of downtown Billings is the arts. "I'd defy anyone in the region to find a better arts and cultural center," adds Kruger. The Yellowstone Art Museum, which recently underwent a \$6.2 million expansion, showcases contemporary and historical Western art. And the Billings Symphony orchestra and headline performers and productions grace the stage at the Alberta Bair Theatre.

Kruger says in order to keep people interested in your downtown area you have to create a draw and a community atmosphere. The Downtown Billings Association sponsors such events as the art walks, farmer's market, holiday parades and the Christmas decorations.

Ready to rethink Billings? For more information call the Downtown Billings Association at (406) 259-5454 or www.downtownbillings.com

DECEMBER

- 1 10th Annual Old-Fashioned Christmas Fair—Livingston 222-4185
- 1 Christmas Parade of Lights—Harlowton 632-4694
- 1 Christmas Stroll—Bozeman 586-4008
- 1 Christmas Stroll—Lewistown 538-5436
- 1 Cowboy Christmas Ball—Big Sky 995-3000
- 1 Holiday Stroll, Artwalk, Tree Lighting Ceremony & Christmas Parade—Bigfork 837-5888
- 1 Powell County Christmas Stroll—Deer Lodge 846-2094 or 846-2684
- 1 Powell County Museum and Arts Foundation Christmas Festival—Deer Lodge 846-2094
- 1 Townsend Christmas Stroll—Townsend 266-4101
- 1 West Shore Holidayfest—Lakeside 844-3880
- 1-2 Kick-Out-The-Kinks Benefit Ski Race—Essex 888-5700
- 1-2 Silver Bells—Fairview 742-5259
- 1-8 Winterbration 2001—West Yellowstone 646-7701
- 2 Christmas To Remember—Laurel 628-4508
- 2 Downtown Holiday Stroll—Missoula 543-4238
- 2 MonDak Ethnic Christmas Celebration—Sidney 482-3500
- 2 Original Governor's Mansion Christmas Tour—Helena 444-4710
- 2 Victorian Christmas At Grant-Kohrs Ranch—Deer Lodge 846-2070
- 3 Christmas Stroll Parade of Lights—Malta 654-1776
- 3 Christmas Tree Lighting—Superior 822-4891
- 6 Annual Christmas Parade/Parade of Lights—Wolf Point 653-2012
- 6-8 Festival Of Trees—Butte 782-0353
- 7 Christmas Stroll—Great Falls 453-6151
- 7 Christmas Stroll—Billings 259-5454
- 7 Christmas Stroll—Miles City 232-2890
- 7 Festival Of Lights—Belgrade 388-1616
- 7 Three Forks Christmas Stroll—Three Forks 285-3198
- 7 Whitefish Christmas Stroll—Whitefish 862-3501
- 7-9 Gun and Hunting Trophy Show—Bozeman 586-6179
- 8 Christmas Stroll—Stanford 566-2277
- 22-30 Holiday Candlelight Tours of Lewis and Clark Caverns—Three Forks 287-3541 or 287-3032
- 24 Christmas Eve Festivities—Big Sky 995-5000

- 24 Christmas Eve Torchlight Parade With Santa—Whitefish 862-2900
- 31 First Night Missoula—Missoula 549-4755
- 31 New Year's Eve Fireworks Display and Celebration—Big Sky 995-5000
- 31 Torchlight Parade & Fireworks Display—Marysville 449-3746
- 31-1/1 Charlie Russell Chew-Choo New Year's Eve Train—Lewistown 538-5436

JANUARY

- 1 New Year's Snowmobile Poker Run—Lincoln 362-4335 or 362-4078
- 1 Year 2002 Flathead Lake Polar Bear Plunge—Bigfork 837-5018 or 837-6096
- 5-6 Annual Ski Fest—Essex 888-5700
- 10-13 Montana Pro Rodeo Circuit Finals—23rd Annual—Great Falls 727-8115
- 11-12 Ag Days and Trade Show—Sidney 433-1206
- 17-19 MAGIE MT Agricultural and Industrial Expo—Great Falls 761-7600
- 18-20 Snow Boss Snocross Race—Haugan 678-4242
- 18-27 Seeley Lake Area Winterfest—Seeley Lake 677-2880
- 19 Montana Cowboy Poetry Wintercamp—Big Timber 932-4227
- 20-22 Women's Ski Workshops—Whitefish 862-2909
- 25 Micro Brew Review and Cool Dog Ball—Helena 442-3263
- 26 Montana Senior Olympics Winter Games/Nordic Event—Bozeman 586-5543
- 26-27 The Seeley-Lincoln 100/200 Dog Sled Race—Seeley Lake 677-3016
- 27 On the Way to Salt Lake 2002—West Yellowstone 646-7701

FEBRUARY

- 1 Area Special Olympics Competition—Neihart 236-5522
- 1 Cowtown Beef Breeders Show, Craft Expo & Ag Trade Show—Miles City 232-2890
- 1-3 Northern Rodeo Association Finals—Billings 252-1122
- 1-3 Whitefish Winter Carnival—Whitefish 862-3501
- 2 13th Annual \$1,000.00 Super Poker Ride—Haugan 678-4242
- 2-3 Montana Powder 8's Championship—Bozeman 586-1518
- 2-10 Frost Fever/Winterfest—Missoula 523-2754
- 2-3/31 Winternational XV Sports Festival—Butte 723-3177

- 3-4 Snowboard Jam—Missoula 549-9777
- 3-3/17 23rd Annual Juried Exhibit—Miles City 232-0635
- 5-10 Montana Winter Fair—Bozeman 585-1397
- 8-9 Chocolate Festival—Anaconda 563-2422
- 8-14 Race to the Sky Sled Dog Race—Helena 442-4008
- 9 Chocolate and Valentine Fair—Helena 443-5291
- 9 Snowmobile Poker Run—Lincoln 362-4335 or 362-4078
- 10 Lincoln Dog Days—Lincoln 362-4949 or 362-4892
- 14 Romance at the Moss Mansion—Billings 256-5100
- 14-16 Billings Home and Garden Show/Health & Fitness Expo—Billings 245-0404
- 14-16 Montana Agri-Trade Exposition—Billings 245-0404
- 16 Ice Fishing Tournament—Glasgow 228-2222
- 16 Wine and Food Festival—Great Falls 761-1900
- 16-18 Northern Division Freestyle Competition—Missoula 549-9777
- 22-24 Glendive Agri-Trade Exposition—Glendive 365-5601
- 23 Moonlight Snowmobile Poker Run—Lincoln 362-4335 or 362-4078
- 23-24 Snowbowl Cup Gelande Championship—Missoula 549-9777
- 24-26 Special Olympics Winter Games—Whitefish 268-6859

For a complete list of events, see us at visitmt.com

FROM MONTANA

The diversity of events, places and people in Montana is almost as wide as the state itself. We hope to give you a taste of that diversity with this quarterly newsletter. In addition, my office offers these services to editors, writers and producers.

Visual Materials

Color slides, 8"x10" B/W photos and stock video footage are available for editorial use.

Writer/Photographer Referrals

We can put you in contact with many of Montana's most talented and experienced freelance writers and photographers.

Editorial Copy/Calendar of Events

We can provide background information or editorial copy for many subjects. We also maintain a calendar of events for the entire state.

Individual Attention

If you need the latest vacation guide and road map of Montana, a liaison with other government agencies or detailed information to fit a specific story angle, we're here to assist you.

Mary Boyle, Publicity Coordinator